

# The Sumero-Babylonian Origin of the Legend of Adam.

BY PROFESSOR S. H. LANGDON, M.A., PH.D., OXFORD.

THE Sumerian legend of *Adapad*, *Adapa* is preserved in Babylonian texts only. In chap. iv. pp. 175-189 of my *Semitic Mythology* the great similarity of the Babylonian and Hebrew legends of Adapa and Adam has been discussed in detail. In both legends man lost eternal life by the misadventure of Adapa or Adam. The derivation of the Hebrew legend from the Babylonian has been suggested chiefly on two grounds: (i) the similarity of the two names; (ii) the fact that a large portion of the Adapa legend has been found in the Canaanitish cuneiform correspondence with the kings of Egypt, in the archives of Tel-al-Amarna; the texts found in the Egyptian archives are annotated in red ink as though they had been the subject of careful study. It is evident, therefore, that the legend of Adapa was well known in Canaan before the Mosaic period. As to the similarity of the names, Professor Sayce gave a reason for actually reading the name *Adapa* as *Adamu*. See my *Le Poème Sumérien du Paradis*, p. 127, n. 2.

Although it has been generally conceded that the peculiar form in which the legend of the Fall of Man has been presented in the Hebrew of Genesis is based upon the older Babylonian legend, there are so many fundamental divergences (all of which have been discussed in ch. iv. of *Semitic Mythology*) that this theory has not been entirely accepted by Old Testament scholars. The final evidence that Adapa and Adam are one and the same is now at hand. Professor Meissner, *Beiträge zum Assyrischen Wörterbuch* (Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago), p. 78, line 20, has published a syllabary in which the Sumerian word *a-da-ap* is explained by *amēlu*, man. *Amēlu* is the Babylonian translation of Sumerian *adap*, originally *adapad*, *adapa*. The Babylonian word for 'man,' *amēlu*, *awēlu*, means 'the trembling,' 'the flickering one,' 'the transient.' This, then, is the meaning of the Sumerian hero of Eridu. Adapa the sage, who lost eternal life at the gates of heaven by refusing to drink the water of life and to eat the bread of life offered [to] him by Anu in high heaven. The legend employs the word 'man' for the name of that ancestor whose blunder brought mortality upon mankind.

Now, although I still do not see how Adapa(d) can be read as Adamu, it is clear that *Adam* is only a Hebrew translation of Adapa, or the Babylonian *amēlu*. Adapa is explained in the Babylonian text by *zi-ir amlūti*, 'seed of mankind,' i.e. of human offspring, and referred to as *amēlūtu la banītu*, 'the unclean human.' In Sumerian, Babylonian, and Hebrew, the respective words, *adapa*, 'amēlu', 'adām', are generic words for 'man,' the human, as distinguished from gods on the one hand and animals on the other. Since both Babylonian and Hebrew versions of the Fall of Man employ a generic term 'man' for the hero of the legend, it is clear that the Hebrew legend of Adam is derived directly from the poem of Adapa of Eridu.

S. LANGDON

*Oxford.*

SOURCE: S. Langdon, *ExpTim* 43 (1931-32), p. 45.